THE ETHICAL BASIS OF MEDICAL PRACTICE. By Willard L. Sperry, Dean of the Harvard Divinity School. Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., 49 East 33rd Street, New York, N. Y., 1950. $2.50.

When a doctor of divinity, eminent and respected in his chosen field, with a background of many years of helpful and constructive experience in ministering to the mental and spiritual needs of our patients, sees fit to analyze the philosophical basis for our art and science he deserves a thoughtful and attentive hearing.

"The Ethical Basis of Medical Practice" presents in a book of 178 pages divided into 14 chapters the careful and studied conclusions of the dean of the Harvard Divinity School, and comprises in essence the subject matter of two addresses given by the author, one to the students of Harvard Medical School and the other the Roger Morris Lecture for the academic year 1948-49 at the Medical School of the University of Michigan.

The first chapter, "Our Overlapping Professions," indicates Dean Sperry's belief that medicine and the ministry have much in common, and that rather than be antagonistic to or suspicious of each other the representatives of each profession should strive to work harmoniously together in the recognition that the sick individual is in sum a human being with need for spiritual guidance as well as for physical restoration.

In the second chapter, "The Specialist and the General Practitioner," some broad general advice is given to the medical student or intern in the determination of whether to follow general practice or to enter one of the specialties. The author indicates that the minister must have a broad general knowledge of philosophy as well as a keen understanding of human nature in all of its manifestations. The implication is that if he were to specialize in one particular field he would lose his value to serve best the needs of his parishioners. The author's indication of the type of medical student best suited for general practice, and of the one most likely to serve best as a specialist is objective and helpful.

As a basis for evaluating medical ethics, Chapter III, "The Nature of Conscience," deals with fundamentals in the definition of morals, ethics, and conscience.

In Chapter V, "Professions in General," the author begins by emphasizing the theoretical difference between professions and trades and insists on the fact that trades are conducted for profit and professions are organized for service. The question of medical fees, a limited reference to the English system of compulsory health insurance, and some excellent examples of the value of professional ethics to the public, make this chapter particularly valuable. In subsequent chapters, codes of medical ethics are analyzed, quotations from the American Medical Association presented, and historical background indicated. The American tradition of the immediacy and intimacy of the relationship between doctor and patient is expressed as one of the basic fundamentals. By comparison with the ethical codes of ministers and lawyers, the author accords first place to the physician's code and the manner in which he lives it and defends it.

Having laid an excellent philosophic background for the code of medical ethics, the author now addresses himself to specific applications of that code and the difficulties these applications entail.

In Chapter VII, "Our Tragic Moral Choices," are presented some excellent illustrations, one of which is the conflict in which the physician finds himself when an apparently incurable patient requires repeated transfusions of a rare type of blood and the hospital laboratory indicates this rare type of blood should not be wasted on the hopeless patient but should be reserved for use on others whose lives might be saved. After considerable discussion, the author concludes that the true physician must continue to give the transfusions regardless of the apparent hopelessness of the patient under treatment. In a subsequent chapter in elaboration of this conclusion he states that the diagnosis of incurability in this instance was in error, that ultimately the patient so treated did recover.

Chapters headed "Democratic vs. Totalitarian Medicine," "Telling the Truth to the Patient" and "The Prolongation of Life," elaborate the author's fundamental belief in the value and dignity of each individual life, and the basic duty of the physician to preserve and prolong that life and make it as comfortable and happy as possible under any and all circumstances. This basic philosophy prepares the reader for the next two chapters—"Euthanasia—Pro," and "Euthanasia—Con." In "Euthanasia—Pro," there is a definition of the doctrine followed by a brief historical background which includes reference to the Greek attitude and that of primitive societies. A short modern history of the euthanasian movement is given with particular reference to the literature as supplied by the Euthanasian Society of America. In Chapter XII, "Euthanasia—Con," the author honestly and forcefully states his position in opposition to these proposals. He indicates the complications and dangers that might beset society were such a law on the statute books. He cites the corruption of medical ethics in Nazi Germany and refers to Dr. Ivy's article portraying medical crimes as practiced under the Nazi regime. He indicates the basic error of that regime was that the economic welfare of the state was considered of greater importance than the care of the individual patient, and upon that philosophical error the morale of the medical profession disintegrated. He sees in this fact the basic fallacy in the euthanasia philosophy which is that there is such a thing as a life not worth living. As a minister, he contends that all life has value. As a logical consequence of the basic principles of the euthanasia movement he visualizes a social system in which doctors of the army and navy, for example, would go through our veterans' hospitals and cull out the physical and mental misfits in the interest of economic efficiency.

The entire work is well written, studiously presented, and carefully documented as to sources. It leaves the physician-reader with an increased respect for the life of every individual patient under his care and the desire so to practice his art that each patient may indeed receive the care and consideration to which he is entitled as an individual human being and not as a cog in a collectivist machine.

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DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS OF INTERNAL DISEASES—Clinical Analysis and Synthesis of Symptoms and Signs. By Julius Bauer, M.D., F.A.C.P., Clinical Professor of Medicine, College of Medical Evangelists, Los Angeles. 866 pages. Grune and Stratton, New York, 1950. $12.00.

This large book on differential diagnosis demonstrates an exceedingly large fund of information and personal experiences on the part of the author. This is in keeping with what might be expected from his hospital and clinical background.

The unique feature of the book is the wealth of individual case reports with which the author documents the points that he wishes to emphasize in differential diagnosis. This is most useful and emphasizes the author's opinions in a way not possible with words alone. In the case reports and in the discussions, the author demonstrates a well-marked awareness of the importance of the emotions in disease and of psychosomatic correlations.

The author frequently refers to laboratory tests rather than to fine distinctions of symptoms or clinical course in